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Search and Rescue Report of Crash

San Dewayne Francisco

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STATEMENT

Misty 41
25 Nov
1511Z
26 Nov

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1. At approximately 1330 on 25 November, Misty 41, Holden/Konopka, heard Grommet 01 calling for his wing man - 02 - on guard. We had just returned from the tanker and were south west of delta 18. We immediately switched to guard and called Grommet 01. Crown 6 also came up on guard at this time. 01 stated that he thought he had lost his wing man. Crown 6 asked his position and 01 passed it in Lat/Long. We asked if he was close to delta 29; Grommet 01 said negative; that they had just started up route 137 north of Ban LaBoy when his wing man transmitted he was taking a hit. He was unable to raise him on frequency after that. We immediately turned north to head towards his position. At this time we began receiving a strong beeper. Enroute to the area we contacted Invert on guard for clearance into the PCA and notified them that the downed aircraft was probably in North Vietnam. Invert got radar contact with us and passed pigeons to the area. Enroute to the area we heard a call for 02 to come up voice. Grommet 02A immediately replied on guard with his call sign. We passed a tentative position of "3mm north of delta 58" to Invert as we approached Ban LaBoy and began looking for the crash site. The weather was 5/8 to 8/8 coverage of strato-~~on~~, bases at 3500' with tops at 7000'. This coverage was interspersed with large holes which would form, last for 20 - 30 minutes, and then close in again. We attempted to get down through some of these clear areas to locate the crash site. On our first pass we established voice contact with 02A. He said he was "O.K. I guess". We were called once by Invert at this time and requested to fly south as they were showing us "too close to Waterloo". We were across the NVN border at this time. We requested Invert to contact Blue Chip and inform them of the survivors' position in NVN. A large hole formed over the area, and at approximately 1345, we located the still burning aircraft wreckage. The crash site - ME 270185 - is on the side of a ridge line, about half way up the slope. It is approximately 700 meters west of route 137 and 200 meters north of the Nam Corona river. We also observed several people on 137 along with 6 trucks, all in the immediate vicinity. On the next pass we went over the crash site; 02A came up voice and said we passed right over him. We asked Invert to mark the position on radar, and Invert, again, tried to direct us to fly south. For the third time, we asked Invert to contact Blue Chip and inform them of the situation. We also requested clearance to expend on the trucks moving toward the crash site and for additional ordnance to be directed to the area. Misty 41 expended 20mm and several WP rockets on the road and succeeded in driving the trucks and people under cover. On one pass we received approximately 30 to 40 rounds of 23/37mm fire from a gun position along route 137 in the vicinity of delta 58. On another pass we received an undetermined number of rounds of ZPU. This position was about 1 1/2 K. north of delta 58. We again contacted 02A and asked him if he had contact with 02B. He said he hadn't heard from him but that "he should have gotten out". We told 02A to go down on his radio and come up again in 30 minutes. We then called for 02B and got a

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by James Berke

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ATCH 6

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garbled reply. I repeated: "I understand you are Bravo", again a weak, garbled reply which both pilot's thought was an affirmative answer. We were never again able to contact O2B, if in fact we did in the first place. At approximately 1415, M-41 cycled to the tanker. Nail 62 was on the scene holding south of delta 58, and Invert was trying to obtain fighters. The weather remained basically the same with a gradual improvement as the afternoon progressed. While M-41 was on the tanker, M-51 arrived on the scene and was hit by a 23/37mm. They RTBed to Ubon. Misty 61 was on the tanker when M-41 arrived at the tanker, they remained with M-41 and returned to the SAR area with us at 1445. We showed the crash site to them, described the location of the survivor, and marked the gun positions for them. This cycle was spent waiting on fighters, the weather, and trying to get the SAR forces launched. Misty 61 went to the tanker early to get a cycle started so one Misty would be on the scene at all times. A "Gunfighter" flight arrived, however due to the load (high drag and napes) we didn't want to put them on the 23/37mm sites. Misty 41 went for a tanker at approximately 1545. Due to a mix-up by either Invert or Viking, Misty 61 was sent to Cherry track and so was not back on target when M-41 cycled to the tanker. Misty 41 arrived back in the target area at about 1610. Misty 61 was expending Cookie, Flight of 4/105's with CBU-24, on the 23/37mm gun sites. Misty 41 observed 75 to 100 rounds of 23/37mm directed at M-61 and Cookie flight., with air bursts at 7000 ft. Additional flights were expended by M-61 with no ground fire response. Misty 41 felt that the 23/37mm was silenced and, furthermore, sufficiently for enough south not to be a factor to the Sandys and the Jolly's anyway. We requested Crown 6 to send in the Sandies. The Sandies and the Jolly's were being held in Laos a considerable distance from the SAR area. Due to the fire received by M-41, M-51, and M-61, Crown 6 would not allow them in the area until the guns were silenced. We felt that due to the distance from the guns to the SAR area they wouldn't be a factor for the Sandy's. Obtaining fast mover flights for AAA suppression was sporadic. The first flight sent to us was loaded napes and high drags and we wouldn't put them on the guns. Subsequent flights all had CBU-24's and M-117's. There were numerous flights on tanker being controlled by Invert. It appeared that Crown 6 was having communication difficulties with Invert and was unable to coordinate effectively with them for a smooth, steady flow of fighters. The Sandy's were finally released to the area at approximately 1650, however, the Jolly's, and Sandy's 9 and 10, were still held a considerable distance away. We led Sandy 1 and 2 to the crash site and described the survivors location. Sandy 1 and 2 began an ADF search to pinpoint his position and finally succeeded in locating him. Misty 41 departed for the tanker at approximately 1730; Misty 61 was re-entering the area at this time. We briefed them that the Sandy's were in the area pinpointing the survivor and the Jolly's were holding. The weather in the immediate area was clear

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At approximately 1330 hours on 25 November, Misty 51, (Weidman/Kellum), was en-route to the tanker on Peach track to refuel when the Grommet 02 SAR effort was started. Being busy with the tanker, we were unable to monitor the proceedings until dropping off the tanker. We then proceeded back to the foxtrot area to meet Lunar flight at 1420. As we proceeded to the area we called Invert for the particulars of the SAR effort and got the general location of the effort. We informed them we were full of fuel and were available for the SAR effort. Receiving no reply other than acknowledgment we proceeded to south of Tchepone to await Lunar flight. We monitored the SAR effort until about 1410 when we called Crown on guard and told them of our fuel state and availability to participate in the effort. They said they would contact us if we were needed. At approximately 1425 we called Invert and asked about Lunar flight. They said they had not heard from them. About a minute later, Crown called us and asked us to relieve Misty 41 who had to cycle to the tanker. We proceeded at once toward the delta 58 area. As soon as we were on frequency we heard M-41 go to the tanker. To wait so long to bring the next Misty into play in my opinion is a mistake. We had to proceed to the area with nothing but a tacan/DME and no real description from M-41 of the ground situation or status of the downed pilots. The only information we got was by simply monitoring the radio. Arriving in the general area, Crown contacted us and designated M-51 on scene commander. We picked up Nail 62, brought him over on frequency, and found he was obbiting above the clouds over the crash sight. At this time, there was a solid overcast layer at about 6000' that looked fairly thick. Due to our not knowing the exact location of the downed airmen, we told Nail 62 to orbit over the clouds and act as relay to all agencies and top cover for us. We elected to go about 8 miles south, drop under the clouds and try to establish contact with Grommet 02A and B. Finding the bases of the clouds just above the mountain peaks, we entered at Ban Labdy just south of delta 58 and proceeded up Rt 137 to the coordinates that we had copied down. We spotted the general area and made a sweeping pass over it and hear one of the Grommets come up on radio and say he heard us and we were close. Having very little room to turn we slid behind the mountains and elected to make another pass to narrow down Grommet's exact position. On the second pass we told Grommet we would light the burner and to inform us how we passed over him. Doing this, he informed us to come down the slope at him and that we were very near. We again swung around to make a pass to pinpoint his position. This time we passed exactly over him and he told us we were receiving 37mm and heavy ZPU fire. Because of the very low clouds and our ability to talk to him only when very close, we elected to make one more pass to fix the guns positions relative to the pilots, and then pop up through the clouds.

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Running just east of the road, we established voice contact with Grommet and immediately were hit by a 37mm shell in the left aileron. We punched off the stones and departed for NKP eventually landing at Ubon. To make a few observations, Misty 51 should have been brought into the effort in time to have been thoroughly briefed by Misty 41 and allowed to set up a fuel-cycle overlap so as to always haveing a Misty in the area. This would allow a constant update of the situation as well as the ability to put fast movers in at any break in the weather.

James D. Weidman


JAMES D. WEIDMAN, 1 Lt, USAF
Commando Sabre Pilot

Ralph C. Dellum

RALPH C. DELLUM, Capt, USAF
Commando Sabre Pilot

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